

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 01050 181538Z

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, IT, VT
SUBJECT: VATICAN VIEWS ON CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE

1. I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET VATICAN FOREIGN MINISTER ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI JANUARY 17 AT LUNCHEON ARRANGED BY SARROS AND WE DISCUSSED VARIOUS SUBJECTS INCLUDING THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION, THE RECENT DAYAN VISIT TO THE VATICAN AND HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP TO THE U.S. (JANUARY 22-28).

2. REGARDING THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE, CASAROLI OBSERVED THAT OUR RECENT STATEMENTS HAD THE DESIRABLE EFFECT OF SETTING RECORD STRAIGHT THAT U.S. WAS NOT INDIFFERENT TO POLITICAL COURSE OF ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES AND ESPECIALLY ITALY. HE APPROVED OF STATEMENTS SAYING THAT ITALIAN JOURNALISTS DO NOT APPLY AMERICAN JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS IN ANALYZING VIEW POINTS AND SOMETIMES BY USING PHRASES OUT OF CONTEXT, PRODUCE DISTORTIONS WHICH NEED CLARIFICATION AND CORRECTION. HE FURTHER NOTED THAT PRESS AND POLITICAL COMMENTS WERE PREDICTABLE. THE PCI, HE SAID, HAD PARTICULAR REASON TO BE CRITICAL OF THE U.S. BECAUSE IT "SCENTED" THE OPPORTUNITY OF GETTING INTO THE "FORMAL" GOVERNMENT PROCESS AND WAS OBVIOUSLY DISAPPOINTED THAT THIS DID NOT MATERIALIZE.

3. TO REPLY TO MY QUESTION REGARDING THE TIMING OF THE
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PAGE 02 ROME 01050 181538Z

CRISIS, CASAROLI OBSERVED THAT HE HAD BEEN PUZZLED BY THE TIME CHOSE FOR THE CRISIS AND THOUGHT THAT BERLINGUER'S HAND MAY HAVE BEEN FORCED BY THE SOVIET UNION ACTING THROUGH BERLINGUER'S ENEMIES WITHIN THE PARTY ITSELF.

4. WITH REGARD TO THE FUTURE, CASAROLI SAID THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT POLITICAL FORMULA AMONG SEVERAL

WOULD BE CHOSEN FOR RESOLVING CURRENT GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS
BUT OBSERVED THAT DC APPEARED DETERMINED TO SEEK SOLUTION
THROUGH AN UPDATED PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD. HE THOUGHT THAT NEW
ELECTIONS WERE NOT LIKELY TO CLARIFY THE SITUATION AND WOULD HAVE
LONG-TERM BAD EFFECT ON ITALIAN POLITICAL PROCESS BECAUSE
THEY COULD RESULT IN THE ELIMINATION OR FUTHER DIMINUTION
OF THE SMALL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES WHICH NOW PROVIDED A
CUSHION BETWEEN THE DC AND THE PCI. IN THE LATTER CONNECTION
HE LAMENTED THAT ITALY DID NOT HAVE A STRONG SOCIALIST PARTY,
OBSERVING THAT THE PSI, IN ADDITION TO BEING ELECTORALLY
WEAK, IS SO HOPELESSLY DIVIDED INTERNALLY THAT IT WOULD NOT
PLAY A STABILIZING ROLE IN ITALIAN POLITICS.

5. COMMENT: I WAS IMPRESSED WITH CASAROLI'S STATEMENT OF
SUPPORT OF OUR CURRENT LINE IN ITALY. GIVEN HIS REPUTATION
AS AN OPPONENT OF A VATICAN HARD LINE AGAINST THE PCI
(SEE ROME 786), I HAD NOT EXPECTED CASAROLI TO TAKE SUCH
AN UNEQUIVOCAL POSITION. I ASSUME, THEREFORE, THAT HE
IS REFLECTING THE VATICAN POSITION WHICH WAS REPORTED IN
ROME 429. CASAROLI IMPRESSED ME AS A THOUGHTFUL PERSON
WHO IS DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES FOR ITALY IF
THE PCI WERE TO TURN ITS BACK ON THE BERLINGUER LINE. HE BE-
LIEVES THAT THE PCI WAS SUBJECT TO THE SAME HISTORICAL CHANGES AND
EVOLUTION AS ALL POLITICAL MOVEMENTS AND IN THIS HE DISAGREED
WITH DR. KISSINGER'S ANALYSIS OF EUROCOMMUNISM. HOWEVER, HE
IS QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THIS COULD TAKE A LONG TIME
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PAGE 03 ROME 01050 181538Z

AND THAT TO "GAIN TIME" FOR THIS EVOLUTION IT WAS NECESSARY TO
HAVE IN PLACE STRONG DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO CONTEST ITS
HEGEMONY AND TO INDUCE IT TO CHANGE IN DEMOCRATIC DIRECTIONS.
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